

Contributions

REFORMING

B. C. MOOMAW

The papers state that "a movement to exclude liquor dealers from church membership has been started in Louisville, Ky., by Rev. T. T. Eaton, pastor of one of the wealthiest churches in that city. Resolutions were passed urging them to give up their business."

This is almost funny. In the first place it happened in Kentucky where according to popular report the sentiment among the people, including church members, is very much opposed to water as a beverage. Think of a preacher in that community resolving against ripe old Bourbon whiskey. Doubtless he has plenty of courage, but where is his judgment? What a fine optimist he must be. Again, he appears to be alone in this movement. The other preachers have evidently not joined it, else the report would say so. In that case it seems to us that his first task is to convert the preachers. If whiskey is bad for one church it must be bad for all. All of them should, therefore, join in this reform; but some people do not move as rapidly as others, and moral reforms in particular are usually discreet and conservative. It occurs to us that these Kentucky churches might find other questions of a kind with this liquor business against which some thundering resolutions ought to be launched. For instance would it not be well to pass resolutions urging thieves, and adulterers, and even murderers either to give up their business or leave the church? They might pass a resolution politely requesting satan to vacate his pew, or would this be going too far? Perhaps it might be necessary to educate public sentiment up to this point for a good while before attempting so radical a reform.

There are some significant suggestions in this paragraph. It seems that the Rev. Eaton's church, which is afflicted with these liquor dealers, is a wealthy church. The rum business is known to be profitable, and that may explain, at least in part, the opulence of this church. It is wealthy. There is Brother Barl, worth a hundred thousand or so; Elder Jug is exceedingly well off, and as for Deacon Tank, nobody knows how much he is worth. All of them pay up handsomely, and that is one of the embarrassing elements in the situation. We have fears for the Rev. Mr. Eaton's salary. If as Elder Moore charges he is in the preaching business for money, we assure him that he is striking out on the wrong trail. He has given his liquor dealers a year to quit the business, or quit the church. The time granted them is liberal, too much so, but it will not

materially effect the result. A man who will voluntarily continue the liquor business after joining the church will leave the church rather than give it up. If allowed to stay in it, they will pay handsomely for the social prestige which church membership gives them and their families, but invite them out, as this courageous preacher has done and down will go his salary. Hurrah for Brother Eaton. He seems to be a single grain of wheat in a great big pile of chaff, but we trust that his kind will multiply, at least in Kentucky.

"THE ENTERING IN OF THE WEDGE"

J. C. MACKEY

I have read and considered the article by V. M. Reichard, in No. 27, protesting against a resolution taken by the late Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia Conference, referring to the ordaining of the clergy; and, while I do not mean to criticize any word which may have been said against this action, I wish now to state what I believe to be the truth and common sense side of the case.

How one can read the New Testament requirements laid down for the ministry in I Tim. 3:1-7, and feel that every applicant for the sacred office may be, without investigation, safely regarded as measuring up to them, is difficult for me to determine apart from the ignorance which is responsible for rendering the ministry of the old church a derision and a laughing stock. Can there be found a man in the Brethren church to-day, who has even a fair knowledge of our past history, and a corresponding degree of ecclesiastical discernment, that will approve the loose method we have been pursuing in permitting weak and unqualified men to slip into our ministry? I might, at this juncture, mention a few names in lieu of an answer to this question—the names of men who have been accepted as under shepherds by local churches, with little or no question, and sent adrift on the brotherhood, to feed themselves by devouring the flock, flinging the torn and broken fragments to the winds, at the first opportunity to seize new and fairer victims.

But the question seems to be, who shall pass upon the qualifications of applicants for ordination? The Ohio, and Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia Conferences say, a committee of conference; and I believe that is right, and that each district conference should say the same, and take action accordingly.

We shall all agree in ascribing to Christ the pre-eminence. We acknowledge him as the supreme source of all ecclesiastical authority. But, to be consistent herewith, we should maintain that the government of the church is by Christ's word, as well as Christ's Spirit, and that his Spirit is in the church in-

fluencing and bearing witness with the spirits of believers, thus making Christ's government of his people a government by his people. Therefore, we as a church disprove popery, prelacy, and so-called presbyterianism, and aver that Christ's governing spirit dwells in, and actuates all the members of his body—the church. If this be true, what shall we say of the action of congregations, electing their delegates to represent them at their respective District Conferences, with the understanding that such delegates shall devise ways and means to strengthen the defences of our beloved New Testament Zion, and protect her from the lurking forces which, if allowed to prevail, will rob her of her gospel identity, and tarnish the honor of her name? Is it of Christ or not? If it is, surely then the action of conference constituted of such members, is of Christ also; if not, you must abandon the scheme of conference altogether, as an evil thing. It occurs to me that we must admit the former—at any rate, we are not ready for the latter.

In I Tim. 4:14, we have Paul's advice to his young brother, to whom he writes, not to neglect the gift that he possessed, which was given by prophecy, and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. We need not start at the term "presbytery;" it is older than the common form of presbyterial government, and more ancient far than the Presbyterian church. It was applied in New Testament times to elder ministers in the church, to whom were generally referred the graver affairs of government. Inferentially, the meaning of the apostle's statement, in its application to the case pending, is, I take it, that while ecclesiastical authority is by the word and Spirit of Christ, as we have assumed, and the governing Spirit of Christ is in all the members, it is but reasonable to suppose that the word regarding those who shall be admitted to the bishopric may be best interpreted by the elders, or presbyters, ordained of God, and delegated for that end, and that "the gift," for the office, is "given" after qualification in the word, determined by the presbytery. A conference then, composed of a plurality of ordained elders, and laity consecrated to God, possessing the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and representing the local churches, are in the best possible position to interpret and discern the qualifications of candidates for holy orders.

But it is expressly stated that Timothy received his gift of the ministry "by prophecy and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." He was a student of the word, and the elders took that into the account when they resolved to ordain him—at least, we cannot suppose that they failed to examine into the qualifications of the young candidate be-